

Executive Summary

Mission statement: *The mission of Mental Health QUERI is to improve quality of care, outcomes, and health-related quality of life for veterans with depression and schizophrenia by promoting research to close gaps in knowledge and implementing evidence-based practices.*

In 2003, Mental Health QUERI systematically re-evaluated gaps in knowledge and practice, took stock of its portfolio and its research and quality improvement (QI) successes, and continued to address barriers and challenges, as described in this Annual Report and Strategic Plan, March 2004. Mental Health QUERI's leadership and Executive Committee undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process to address gaps, set goals, and prioritize activities to address those goals. The goals reflect successes in meeting existing goals, with planned expansion of ongoing implementation projects in depression and schizophrenia, identification of goals for implementing evidence-based practices and programs that have not previously been addressed by Mental Health QUERI, and careful cultivation of the "implementation pipeline," which moves QUERI research from examining current practices, to intervening to improve practices and outcomes, to studies of strategies for broad implementation in routine clinical and quality improvement practice.

Since its inception, Mental Health QUERI has been successful in soliciting new research that identifies evidence-based practices and intervenes to improve practices for depression and schizophrenia. Mental Health QUERI research has matured from early studies of measurement methods, informatics, and deviations of current practice from best practice to its current portfolio of intervention projects, many of which are reporting positive findings. In addition, Mental Health QUERI has moved rapidly to conduct large quality improvement (QI) research projects that aim to implement practices with an extensive evidence base: collaborative care for depression in primary care settings and evidence-based antipsychotic management for schizophrenia. The depression project, nicknamed "TIDES & WAVES," uses evidence-based quality improvement strategies for implementing collaborative care for depression in 3 VISNs, and has shown improvements in symptoms, functioning, and treatment adherence. Another project ("COVES") is studying cost and value to stakeholders of TIDES & WAVES. The Antipsychotic Treatment Improvement Program (ATIP) reduced use of antipsychotic doses above the guideline-recommended range and reduced estimated antipsychotic costs at four intervention sites. Both projects have disseminated these results nationally to VISN leaders, researchers, and both the mental health and primary care communities. Mental Health QUERI is also studying the implementation of depression guideline recommendations in substance use treatment settings. Other research projects are maturing, and contributing to a concerted advance by Mental Health QUERI toward regional and national rollout of implementation projects.

Mental Health QUERI's goals are:

- *Implement collaborative care for depression in primary care* – although implementation and research are well underway with TIDES/WAVES/COVES projects, further work will expand these efforts regionally, while preparing for national rollout. Successful implementation is very likely to improve detection, treatment, and outcomes for veterans with depression.
- *Improve the outcomes of medication management for schizophrenia*, by promoting use of moderate antipsychotic doses, side effect monitoring, and appropriate clozapine use.
- *Improve treatment adherence for depression and schizophrenia* – collaborative care models and other interventions will promote adherence to medications and other treatments. Research to understand consumer and family perspectives informs these interventions.
- *Implement innovative informatics solutions and emerging technologies to support care management/collaborative care* – Mental Health QUERI is among the leaders in applying information technology and other innovations such as telemedicine in its interventions.
- *Implement a collaborative care model for schizophrenia in specialty care* – this ongoing effort adapts the collaborative care model to the complex treatment needs of persons with schizophrenia. If implementation research in this area is successful, this model and the antipsychotic management intervention will be combined for wider rollout.
- *Implement outcomes monitoring for schizophrenia* – Mental Health QUERI projects have produced innovative and feasible approaches to outcomes monitoring that will be tested in routine care settings, with plans to move toward national implementation over several years.
- *Improve treatment and outcomes of co-occurring substance use disorder and depression or schizophrenia* – In addition to the depression project in substance use treatment settings, further intervention studies are planned.
- *Implement evidence-based psychosocial rehabilitation guidelines for schizophrenia* – Research is needed to adapt and test evidence-based family psychoeducation for veterans; plans to implement VA supported employment provide an outstanding research opportunity.
- *Develop and test peer support programs, including use of consumers as providers, for schizophrenia* – Early VA studies of these innovative programs have begun.
- *Expand the evidence base regarding treatment of depression and schizophrenia and co-occurring medical conditions* to enhance the applicability of guidelines in routine care.

Mental Health QUERI's Annual Report and Strategic Plan describes completed work along with current and planned projects that will enable us to accomplish these goals in collaboration with VHA leadership, clinical managers, clinicians, consumers, and their families.